



e-ACCESS

Your accessible route to
fire and life safety information
for people with disabilities.

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Introducing NFPA “e-ACCESS”

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e-ACCESS is a new NFPA quarterly newsletter designed to help reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life for people with disabilities by providing fire and life safety related information specifically for them, directly to them.

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of this international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

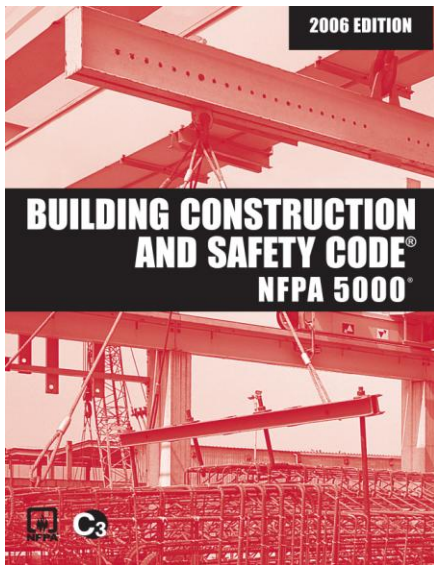
Sign up free NFPA “e-ACCESS” newsletter @ www.nfpa.org/disabilities

DARAC

In August 2004, NFPA President and CEO James M. Shannon established the “Disabilities Access Review & Advisory Committee” (DARAC). Its purpose it is to help the NFPA president ensure that NFPA codes and other safety initiatives recognize and fully consider the needs of people with disabilities by:

- Identifying existing needs and emerging issues within the disability community.
- Providing recommendations to the NFPA president as to how NFPA can offer leadership on such issues.
- Working to ensure that NFPA’s codes and standards development process reflects the latest thinking on disability access provisions and other matters which affect the disability community.

Thus it was that NFPA began expanding our ability to bring our mission to a segment of the population too often ignored when it comes to fire and life safety issues.



NFPA 5000

In 2006, [NFPA 5000® - Building Construction and Safety Code®](#) forged into new territory by incorporating all the scoping provisions of the ADA/ABA-AG and HUD’s *Fair Housing Guidelines* becoming both the only ANSI-accredited national building code and reducing the number of documents designers and code officials need to use from four to two and helping ensure that buildings are properly constructed for better access.



[Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities](#)

In March 2007, NFPA published its [“Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities”](#) as a free, downloadable document. It was the single most popular document downloaded from NFPA’s website over the next four months and more than 26,000 copies have been downloaded through April 7, 2008.

In May 2007, NFPA DARAC asked Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) to consider developing test standards and third-party certification programs for products marketed to people with disabilities through a presentation to UL’s Consumer Advisory Council.

WSC&E 2007

At [NFPA’s World Safety Conference & Exposition®](#) in Boston, Massachusetts, in June 2007, Warren McDaniels, retired chief of the New Orleans Fire Department and former chair of NFPA’s Board of Directors who sadly passed away this past February, opened the General Session by saying in part,

“This year NFPA expanded its portfolio of preparedness materials with the development and release of a new [Emergency Evacuation Guide for People with Disabilities](#). This document, released in March has been the single most popular download from NFPA every month since. From it will come training and other materials to guide those who must ensure the well being of all building occupants.”

“I am proud to serve as chairman of the board for NFPA. When I say that, it comes from the bottom of my heart, from a lifetime of using and benefiting from the great work of NFPA and from seeing others apply the work of NFPA during some of my darkest days. I am tremendously proud of all that this organization does to make the world safer and to save lives. You should be as well, for everyone here today plays a part in that success.”

[NFPA Journal](#)[®] ran a major article of interest to people with disabilities. In the May/June, 2005 issue of [Journal](#) a new technology called “directional sound”, which helps people with vision impairments find exits, is discussed and a feature called [“Simplifying the Accessibility \(Disability\) Myth”](#) ran in the May/June 2007 issue of [Journal](#)[®].



Bill Scott

Fire Prevention Week 2007

As part of NFPA’s October 2007 Fire Prevention Week activities, DARAC Chair, Bill Scott and NFPA staff presented the first public seminar on the [Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities](#) in Chicago which was jointly sponsored by the Illinois State Fire Marshal and Chicago Fire Commissioner. Over 65 people attended including folks from the fire service, the Chicago Mayor’s office, state government, local and national social service agencies, universities, and high-rise building safety and security managers.

The following day Bill Scott and NFPA staff conducted research at a suburban Chicago facility housing many dozens of people with disabilities to see how they used the Guide. This research will be used to expand and update the guide in the coming months.



Some of the participants in Chicago research event.

With this inaugural issue of *e-ACCESS*, NFPA continues to move forward with yet another product in our mission to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

We hope you enjoy it and we look forward to bringing you valuable and timely information in our future issues!

Type C (Visitable) Dwelling Units Criteria to be Included in the 2008 ANSI/ICC A117.1

*By Dominic Marinelli
Accessibility Services
United Spinal Association*

The ANSI A117.1 standard will soon include design criteria for visitability features that could be adopted by municipalities or via state/local ordinance for implementation across the country. The inclusion of visitability criteria in A117.1 is the culmination of the efforts of a working group of the A117 ANSI Standards Committee (originally convened in 2006) charged with developing model code guidelines for housing not covered by the Fair Housing Act - that is, for new one- to three- family dwellings - that would be suitable for adoption by local jurisdictions, whether a given jurisdiction intended to apply it to all new houses or within a narrower scope. The working group includes disability advocates as well as members from federal agencies such as the US Access Board and HUD. These guidelines, now known as Type C (Visitable) Units, were favorably recommended by the ICC in a

January 2008 vote to be published for a period of public comment, after which they will be formally accepted, modified or rejected.



Purpose of Type C

The purpose of the Type C technical requirements is to provide a model for accessibility that can be adopted to apply to new houses not covered by the Fair Housing Act. Local authorities are encouraged to consider exemptions where conditions such as extreme topographical conditions warrant them. To date, more than 30,000 houses in the U.S. have zero-step entrances, wider interior doors, and a few additional basic access features as a result of local requirements (which differ). Requirements provided within the Type C criteria are intended to provide consistency throughout the country. Municipalities that have adopted a visitability policy/ordinance include:

- Atlanta, Georgia
- Freehold, New Jersey
- Austin, San Antonio, Houston - Texas
- Irvine, Visalia, San Mateo County, Long Beach - California
- Urbana, Naperville, Bolingbrook, Chicago, Rockford - Illinois
- Howard County, Montgomery County - Maryland
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Onondaga County, Southhampton, Syracuse, Auburn - New York
- Pima County, Prescott Valley -Arizona
- Iowa City, Iowa;
- Escanaba, Michigan;
- St. Louis County, Missouri;
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania;
- St. Petersburg, Florida;
- Toledo, Ohio;

- Scranton, Pennsylvania;
- Arvada, Colorado;

It is important to note that the intent of the Type C unit is not to extend the Fair Housing Act to single-family homes. The idea is that every home in a neighborhood can have the most important accessible features needed so that people who have a disability can visit the home and those who incur a disability can remain living in their homes while they plan and make additional renovations they might need. So the application of visitability is based on widespread, i.e. universal, application to primarily owner occupied dwellings.

According to Eleanor Smith with Concrete Change in Atlanta, a project dedicated to making all new homes visitable, "These [Type C] features have the potential for a tremendous boost to *integration* instead of *isolation*. Whether you're an 8-year-old with cerebral palsy hoping to go to her classmate's party, or an older person with multiple sclerosis wanting to go to the family reunion, Type C criteria will prove beneficial. Additionally, these features make it possible for someone to come home from the hospital to recuperate after incurring short-term disabilities that limit mobility."

Overview of Criteria

The technical criteria for a Type C unit have been summarized below. For the complete language of Type C Unit Criteria, please contact Jennifer Perry.

The home should have at least one accessible entrance into the home which is accessed from a public street or sidewalk, a dwelling unit driveway, or a garage.

An accessible circulation path shall connect an entrance with a toilet room or bathroom, with one habitable space with an area of 70 square feet (6.5 meters) minimum, and with a food preparation area, if one is provided on the entrance level of the home.

The toilet room or bathroom should have basic clearance at the water closet and reinforcements in the walls for the future installation of grab bars

Doors with sufficient clear width of 31 ¾ inches shall be provided throughout the entrance level of the home

Lighting controls and receptacle outlets shall be mounted within accessible reach ranges, with exceptions.

Clearances between all opposing base cabinets, counter tops, appliances, or walls in food preparation areas, if provided on the entrance level, shall be 40 inches (1,015 millimeters) minimum.

ANSI/ICC A117.1 -

The design criteria listed above will be included in the ANSI/ICC A117.1 2008 edition, most likely under the heading of Section 1006 – Type C (Visitable) Units. This section will follow the Sections in A117.1 that include the requirements for Accessible, Type A and Type B dwelling units. The success in having the Type C Unit criteria included in the ANSI/ICC A117.1 standard is that it truly promotes the goals of visitability, which is to give all individuals the ability to gain access into and out of a home and to use the bathroom. These design features will, in turn, benefit many homeowners that may incur a temporary or long-term disability. Much research has been done that supports the fact that constructing homes with these features is inexpensive and easy. Hopefully, the inclusion of these requirements in the A117.1 standard will promote the design and construction of visitable homes nationwide

As this process moves forward, Accessibility Services will keep you updated. Should you wish to learn more about the Type C dwelling unit proposal, please contact Dominic Marinelli at dmarinelli@unitedspinal.org. You can also visit the following websites to learn more about Visitability: www.concretechange.org and <http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/~idea/>.

United Spinal Association was founded in 1946 by paralyzed veterans who dedicated themselves to developing accessibility requirements to improve conditions for all people with disabilities. Dominic Marinelli and the organization’s Accessibility Services (ACS) team of attorneys, design professionals, and plans examiners are dedicated to ensuring compliance for their clients and providing accredited training and technical assistance to architects and building officials throughout the country. For more information on United Spinal Association’s Accessibility Services team please visit: www.accessibility-services.com



Beyond the Precipice

*By Bill Scott
Founder and President of Abilities UNlimited, Inc.*

A few months ago I had the opportunity to be the test subject, otherwise known as the “crash test dummy”, in a test run of an emergency evacuation chair. The manufacturer or model of this particular chair is unimportant and would not have mattered. It was a harrowing experience!



I have a spinal cord injury and have been a wheelchair user for more than thirty years. As any wheelchair user, novice or veteran, knows, you never let your front caster drop off the edge of a step. If this happens, it could be catastrophic, possibly even fatal.

So when Allan pushed the evac chair forward beyond the precipice of the top step, I found myself seriously asking, “What I have I gotten myself into?” This is a question that one does not have time to ask when the fire alarm is blaring, and smoke is filling the air. When all about you are losing their heads, how can you-and more importantly, the person pushing the evac chair-, be expected to remain calm enough to get you both down the stairs and out to safety? To say this is challenging is an understatement.

My experience with the evac chair was under calm, controlled conditions, which is as it should be during a test run. It is only by virtue of this experience that I can get a true sense of that “lost in space” feeling as the chair goes where this man has never gone before. (Alright, I went through this once before.

But that was a long time ago and I was much younger and more daring.) It was only through this kind of experience that Allan could find out what it’s really like to help someone who, in this situation, is almost totally dependent upon him.

Based on my first-hand awareness of what it’s like to be evacuated in an evac chair, and as chairperson of the Disability Access Review Advisory Committee (DARAC), I support the draft provisions for “Stair descent devices” in [NFPA 101[®], LifeSafety Code[®]](#) and [NFPA 5000[®], Building and Construction Safety Code[®]](#).

DARAC’s 3rd Annual Report included the following statement;

“The committee did not agree with the concepts of reducing stair width or for determining the number of stair descent devices that should be required. The committee voiced support for the Averill comment on 101-89 (Log#CP132) that, based upon careful and scientific investigation of the relationship between human dimensions, stairwell width, and stairwell performance, the 1975 work of John Templer clearly demonstrates the advantages of 56- inch (142.2- centimeter)stairwells over 44- inch (111.7-centimeter) stairwells. Given the trend of decreasing evacuation ability of occupants, 56- inch (142.2-centimeter) stairs would seem a reasonable minimum width. The committee also would like to see additional/modified criteria be added for these devices including:

- Operable by one person
- Have a brake
- Have straps for at least:
 - chest
 - waist
 - thigh/knee
 - ankle
- Have a carrying capacity of 350 pounds (158.7 kilograms)
- Brake must stop device within 12 inches (304.8 millimeters) of travel

As a society, we have learned a great deal about emergency evacuation of people with disabilities. We have learned from the World Trade Center disaster, the aftermath of hurricanes Rita and Katrina, and other situations where even the best laid plans went awry. We may not be able to prepare for every eventuality, but we are obligated to raise awareness, and bring about positive change where we can.

Abilities UNlimited, Incorporated was founded in 1988 to provide professional disability related consulting services with an emphasis on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA).

Abilities UNlimited has worked with numerous public and private sector clients to help them better understand how the ADA & FHAA influences their facilities, services, and programs. AUI's goal is to give our clients the tools and knowledge that is needed to integrate all people into the mainstream of corporate and community activities.

<http://www.abilitiesunlimited.com/>



NFPA – Your Source for Safety Information

*Judy Comoletti
NFPA Assistant Vice-President, Public Education*

The goal of NFPA’s public education division is to position NFPA as the primary source of fire and other hazard information to reduce residential fire deaths, injury, and property loss. In order to meet our goal, we need to be sure our information is the best available. Messaging plays an important part in all of our public education activities. It’s the backbone of education and one of our most important activities. Fire and life safety messages are always changing as codes are updated, behavioral issues identified through fire data, and new technology developed to provide for our safety.

In 1999, NFPA participated in the first of two symposia to address the fire safety needs of people with disabilities. As a result of these symposia, NFPA made a commitment to provide information and materials to reach this high-risk audience. Our Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force was created in 2002 and continues to provide valuable support for our outreach efforts. The task force includes NFPA staff as well as nationally recognized experts in the field of disability issues, people with disabilities, educators, fire service and allied health representatives. The goals of the task force are to:

- Help guide NFPA in the development and review of educational materials and programs to ensure that fire and life safety messages for people with disabilities are included.
- Make sure that fire safety education materials are accessible, sensitive, and correct for audiences inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Ensure that materials are in accessible formats.

The task force reviews our educational brochures and program materials and recommends opportunities for inclusion and appropriateness for people with disabilities. We’ve created brochures, flyers and [classroom lesson plans](#) for people with disabilities. I recently created a classroom lesson plan and materials on escape planning for children with disabilities. The Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force reviewed the materials and provided suggestions that were important in making the lesson work for the intended audience. My goal was to create the lesson plan for early elementary grades. However, input from our disability experts included lesson plan modifications that make it usable for students in all grade levels. This type of input is so valuable to our public education goal

NFPA’s Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force is an important component of the public education division. The task force meets annually to plan educational sessions for [NFPA’s World Safety Conference & Exposition®](#), review NFPA safety materials and recommend new materials to reach this high-risk audience. Many of the materials created for people with disabilities are available free on [NFPA’s web site](#).



Future issues of *e-Access* will include articles from our public education high-risk specialists who will keep you up to date on all of our public education activities, especially those reaching people with disabilities. NFPA is your source for safety information.

Do you have a story to tell or information to share?

Our readers are people with disabilities, their relatives, caregivers, and friends.

Our goals are to:

- Provide specialized information about fire and life safety for people with disabilities directly to people with disabilities and those who assist them, that will help reduce or eliminate fire deaths and injuries, as well as those resulting from other emergency situations
- Provide a forum for the collection and dissemination of information for people with disabilities in support of DARAC’s mission

Content for future editions will include:

- NFPA related news
 - DARAC news
 - NFPA codes and standards-related information
 - Fire safety tips
 - Emergency evacuation information
 - Other
- Articles relating to the safety of people with disabilities from:
 - NFPA staff
 - DARAC members
 - Other national advocates
 - General news
- Other Standards Developing Organizations news
 - U.S. Access Board
 - ANSI/ICC A117, *Standard for Accessible Buildings and Facilities*
 - U.S. Department of Justice
 - Other

Editorial Calendar, the theme for upcoming editions:

- September 2008 – Fire Prevention Week, Evacuation, Fire Drills
- December 2008 – Residential Sprinklers
- March 2009 – Applicable Standards
- June 2009 – Elevators

If you’d like to contribute an article or information consistent with the outline above, please e-mail them to Allan B. Fraser, Senior Building Code Specialist and *e-Access* coordinator at: afraser@nfpa.org